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TOM O'HALLERAN
1ST DISTRICT, ARIZONA

January 21, 2022

Mr. Jeffrey Zients
COVID-19 Response Team Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Mr. Zients,

Thank you for your continued leadership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. As you know, the spread of the Omicron variant has posed unique challenges stretching existing testing resources. For this reason, I applaud the Biden Administration's decision to mail four rapid tests to every American address that requests one.

However, while this is an option that will work for most Americans in urban, suburban, and exurban settings, it leaves behind many who live in rural, tribal, and underserved communities. Complicating matters is that many Native American families share a P.O. Box address. For instance, extended family members—including Tribal elders—use the same address as their relatives even if they do not live in the same household. Consequently, several families will count as one family unit and thus receive significantly fewer tests than needed. Additionally, many Native American households are multi-generational, with children, parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents living under the same roof. The four test per mailing address solution will not work for most Native Americans residing on tribal lands.

Rural Americans face similar challenges. Reports indicate that rural addresses are not being accepted by U.S. Postal Service's free testing site. Many rural Americans must travel long distances to community-based testing sites or to any local pharmacy or retailer that may have a supply of rapid tests. COVID-19 vaccination rates in rural America lag behind those in other communities, meaning that this latest COVID-19 wave has the potential to overwhelm already stretched rural health facilities. Rapid tests will prove a vital early-detection tool to limit the spread of COVID-19 in rural communities.

I fear that the Administration is overlooking the needs of our tribal and rural communities and request that you immediately prioritize supplies of rapid test kits to tribal governments to distribute to those living on tribal nations. I also am requesting that the Administration provide targeted

deliveries of rapid tests to Community Health Centers (CHCs), Sole Community Hospitals, and other Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs) that provide for the health care of rural America. This will ensure that these test kits make it to those who currently lack easy access to COVID-19 testing resources.

Thank you for your dedicated and ongoing commitment to combating the pandemic. I look forward to continuing to work with you in this fight.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom O'Halleran". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom O'Halleran
Member of Congress